

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 127 495

CG 010 712

TITLE Alternative Learning Community Slide Presentation.
PUB DATE [75]
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (Chicago, Illinois, April 11-14, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Alternative Schools; *Continuation Education; *Educational Alternatives; Educational Programs; High School Students; *Instructional Aids; *Program Descriptions; Secondary Education; *Student Needs

ABSTRACT

What do you do with a destructive student within the traditional framework who is threatened with expulsion? How about the conflicted student with personal and family problems who cannot tolerate a large classroom situation? Is there a place for the pregnant married or unmarried youngster who is too embarrassed to face her classmates? Do you abandon students with severe financial problems who want to complete their education but must work long hours to help at home? Must they drop out of school? Recently, the Normandy School District in St. Louis County has established a federally funded, Title 7 Alternative Learning Community Center for the turned off students within their school district. This paper is the script of the commentary which accompanies a slide presentation designed to describe the program offered through the Center. Although the slides are not included, the description is complete without them. (Author/CJ)

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ALTERNATE LEARNING COMMUNITY SLIDE PRESENTATION

SLIDES 1 - 5

Slides are flashed on screen with music in background.

SLIDE 6

All students have different educational, social and emotional needs. The diversity of these needs is heightened in a school where the students have varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Because traditional high school settings are not always flexible enough to interest and motivate all students, many youth become apathetic and disenchanted.

SLIDE 7

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The Normandy School District has established the Alpha Center, its first alternate learning community, as an educational option for these students. The Alpha Center has become reality through the work of many people. Acting of a board resolution and with the encouragement of administrators, staff and members of the community,

SLIDE 8

Dr. A. D. McClain, Normandy's director of pupil personnel services, wrote a proposal to establish an alternate learning community. The proposal was submitted for federal funding through Title VII of the Emergency School Aid Act, and was accepted.

SLIDE 9

In August, 1975, Mrs. Jerry Williams was appointed project director and preparations for the opening of the center began.

SLIDE 10

This vacant office, located in a Normandy shopping center, is the site which has been rented for the Alpha Center. Located about five minutes from the senior high campus, this site was selected for many reasons. It is located in the center of the Normandy community and is easily accessible by car and public transportation. Its pleasant surroundings and proximity to a branch of the St. Louis County library enhance its educational value.

SLIDE 11

The vacant building was soon transformed into a center for learning. Normandy carpenters began to partition a large one-room office into a reception area and three learning centers. Additional staff members were hired, including three teachers and secretary, and a workshop was held to help prepare them for their new assignments.

SLIDE 12

Donations of supplies and furniture were sought to supplement the equipment and materials purchased with federal and Normandy funds. Members of the community, local businesses, parents and other Normandy schools supported the school through their generosity. Their contributions, ranging from refrigerators to desks to pencils and paper, helped to make the school ready for its opening in November, 1975.

SLIDE 13

Before enrolling in the Alpha Center, prospective students and their parents are interviewed by the

director. All students accepted for the program must meet qualifications for admission to the senior high and have earned less than nine units of senior high credit. In addition they may have histories of repeated truancy, suspensions, academic failure or racial or social conflict. The students must be willing to enroll in the program and secure parental approval.

SLIDE 14

Enrollment in the Alpha Center is kept as low as possible to insure that classes will be small enough for the teachers to attend to the needs of each individual.

SLIDE 15

Although the enrollment figures are constantly changing, the Center now has a total of 34 students, 17 ninth graders and 17 tenth graders. Two groups of students meet daily for either a three-hour morning or afternoon session.

SLIDE 16

Most of the classes consist of groups of five or six students. This low pupil/teacher ratio enables teachers to spend large amounts of time with each student and plan individual courses of study to meet their needs. Courses are offered for credit in English, social studies, math and science.

SLIDE 17

In addition to the small group instruction, learning frequently takes place on a one-to-one basis. Working directly with a student, Mrs. Sherrie Turner, the Alpha Center's English teacher, is able to reward and evaluate his performance much more quickly than she could in a traditional high school setting.

SLIDE 18

The Alpha Center is a student-oriented school, one which cares about students and listens to them. Mrs. Judy Kremer is part of the staff, which is experienced in working with low-achievers and totally dedicated to promoting student growth in all ways.

SLIDE 19

The staff at the Alpha Center realizes that the achievements and progress each student make are important. Sometimes, an over-emphasis on competition and rating students in comparison to a group can be self-defeating and demoralizing. Consequently, competition is not stressed at the Alpha Center. Each student is encouraged to progress towards his individual learning objectives.

SLIDE 20

Alpha Center teachers consistently strive to find new ways to "turn the students" to learning. Mrs. Portia Bibb has found that students in her social studies classes may enjoy learning from sources other than textbooks. Copies of documents, paperbacks, handouts, and worksheets often serve as important learning tools at the Center.

SLIDE 21

Good rapport between staff and students and the informal classroom setting at the Center help to create an intimate, unthreatening atmosphere for learning.

SLIDE 22

The students are relaxed and enjoy learning in ways which are both physically and emotionally comfortable for them.

SLIDE 23

One measure of the Center's success can be found in the fact that students are actually coming to school. In most cases attendance has improved dramatically. Students who seldom attended classes at the senior high have earned perfect or nearly-perfect attendance records. Attitudes and conduct have improved greatly as well.

SLIDE 24

Students can earn credit, which is applicable towards their high school diploma, on the basis of the competency they demonstrate in a required subject.

SLIDE 25

The students are responsible for achieving the basic objectives of these required courses. However, the activities through which they achieve these objectives are flexible. When a student completes the objectives of one course, he progresses to another course of study.

SLIDE 26

Although the program is designed to meet the needs of students in grades 9 and 10, the curriculum attempts to meet the needs of students regardless of the grade level in which they are functioning. For example, a student may be performing on a fourth grade level in reading and an 11th grade level in math. Flexible scheduling allows the student to receive instruction in any subject in relation to his specific needs.

SLIDE 27

Guidance counseling is an important component of the alternate learning program. Mrs. Williams, an experienced counselor, is well-prepared to answer questions about future educational and vocational opportunities. Six Alpha Center students have applied for enrollment in the County Technical School and two students are taking health courses through a University of Missouri correspondence program.

SLIDE 28

Mrs. Williams and other members of the staff pay close attention to the students' social and emotional problems, in addition to working on raising academic achievements.

SLIDE 29

Mrs. Joyce Jones, the Alpha Center secretary plays an important role in the counseling team as well. She takes an avid interest in the students and is part of the advisor-advisee team in which each member of the staff is assigned to specific students to help them with academic and social problems.

SLIDE 30

Mrs. Jones is particularly popular with some of the girls who plan to pursue careers in business and secretarial fields. Serving as a model for these students, she often assists them with typing and office practice skills which are not part of the regular Alpha Center curriculum.

SLIDE 31

Making the most of individual talents is encouraged at the Alpha Center. One student with exceptional artistic ability designed a mural for the back room of the Center.

SLIDE 32

He takes pride in the work which he does well, and is developing a talent which can flourish even more with the patience and care of an art teacher.

SLIDE 33

Through the cooperative efforts of parents, staff and students, the Alpha Center is beginning to realize some of its goals.

SLIDE 34

... to help students acquire basic skills and complete credits which apply towards graduation... to accept responsibility through work or volunteer activities...

SLIDE 35

*... to learn to get along in new and familiar situations
... to develop a positive self-image... and, ultimately,
to return to classes at Normandy Senior High School.*